

Death and War

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Death and War

by [AceofNowhere](#)

Summary

*Alina touched the souls of those begging to depart, those begging to remain, and it was all she could do.
she wanted. oh, she wanted to stop. she wanted to rest and relieve herself of this horror, this daily work of pain and ache.
but Alina was death, and war was only beginning.*

Bonus entry for Darklina Week. Alina is Death for the Four Horsemen of the Apocolypse.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

death looked before her and wept.

days had gone by and Alina hadn't stopped for a moment; there were so many lives to take. the old and infirm were sometimes grateful. the gleam in an old woman's eye when Alina touched her brow and took her soul into her hand was one of peaceful resignation. Alina sighed with her when the life was finally within her and carried off into the afterlife.

but the young, the bright, the hungry, these she knew she was taking before their time.

the young man twitched as he lay on the street, blood spurting from his eyes and mouth. unexplained disease was rolling through the cities, and Alina brooded through the alleys, taking souls as they groaned on the ground. boils, pus, sores; it wasn't a beautiful death, not a soft bed with pillows of goosefeathers.

these deaths were horrible, wretched, but pestilence would shrug at death, her red hair shining in the weak sunlight and point at the horizon.

"it's thanks to him," Genya told her. "if not for those wars, these refugees wouldn't be packed like sardines within these city walls."

Alina scowled and hushed her, then followed the moans of the royals, who, too, were unable to shelter themselves from all harm. heartless though Genya was, she was an equal opportunist. "no one can hide from me," she said. "i am ruination."

soon the valleys were quiet, silently waiting, and Alina knew to go there. a poor harvest followed by too many dry springs, too many fiery summers, and Alina came to clutch entire families in her arms.

children rasped before her, and she went to them first to carry their souls away. their parents coughed and cried, horrified and in deeper pain than their stomachs could cause them. starvation crept over the farmlands, the countryside, and into the homes of the poor.

Alina's heart broke when she carried a small babe, only days old, who had been crying on the empty teet of its dead mother. all Alina could offer either of them was to take their hands and send them into the next world.

famine sat on his hay bale throne and laughed when she accused him of this horror. "what did you honestly think?" Nikolai asked her, one leg crossed over the other. a crown of daisies rested on his head, and the sunset created a halo around him. "there isn't enough food to go around. they must feed the soldiers, the endless, endless soldiers." he shrugged, and leaned back as the sun went down behind him, creating shadows that lingered in Alina's eyes.

"still i see hope in their eyes," Nikolai whispered. "it's delicious to watch it fade."

Alina screamed at the sky when she had to take an entire village the next day.

on her knees she begged, she crawled, but there was no one but her to take them. they didn't even cry, didn't even open their eyes to look at her one last time before their lives ended.

Alina had always counted on those last looks, the ones that told her life had been worth living, holding on to for every moment they had.

but when Alina touched their hands, they were already cold.

life had been cruel to them, so cruel, but Alina could hear the screams from beyond the border, and she knew where she had yet to go.

blood. guts. bile.

sweat. torture. tears.

Alina stared out at the battlefield, and she didn't know what she felt.

her stomach clenched at the sight of these young men and women—ones who should be plowing the fields tending to the stock reading books in libraries weaving cotton into gowns kissing loving laughing holding hoping—tore each other to shreds over made up lines in the sand.

metal clanged and shots fired and Alina could smell the burning smoke from miles away, she could see it reaching up toward the sky like a hand begging for mother. the shouting was vile—it was pointed, fear and anger and terror all used against the enemy.

these enemies, with different eyes and different noses and different mouths, with equal hearts and equal humor and equal dreams, were wasted on the battlefield.

Alina touched the souls of those begging to depart, those begging to remain, and it was all she could do.

she wanted. oh, she wanted to stop. she wanted to rest and relieve herself of this horror, this daily work of pain and ache.

but Alina was death, and war was only beginning.

he stood before her, black cloak caught in the wind. it spread out against the night sky, blotting out the starlight above.

“how could you,” Alina asked. her throat was raw from crying, her posture weak from walking so far. “all these people, all these lives. they are wasted because of you.”

Aleksander turned to her, and his dark eyes flickered. “they are won,” he said.

Alina SCREAMED.

SHE S C R E A M E D.

she tore at his clothes! his flesh! she ripped his face and left a ribbon of scars in her wake! she howled at the moon and she grasped his chest! his heart! she thought, aim for his heart!

but war stood tall and crossed her. he grabbed her hands and held them aloft, high above toward that night, beckoning sky. she fell to her knees and her arms lay open wide, as though Death were exalting War with intense adulation.

they were the defeated and the victor, and Alina's face was as wet with tears as Aleksander's were with blood.

"Alina," he whispered, bowing his head toward her. his breath fanned over her face, the most warmth she'd felt in so long. "Alina, this is us."

she shook her head. "this is you," she cried. "i am your slave."

Aleksander grasped her wrists, twisted them—

—let them go.

his eyes were black as the sea, as black as the hopelessness that curled inside her. an hysterical laugh sounded in the night, screaming like a cursed, cloying banshee.

he grasped Alina's hand and brought it to his lips, kissing the scarred tissue delicately as a flower's petal.

"we are each other's," he said.

the night held its breath. it blew out the prongs from a late summer's dandelion, making one final wish.

Alina stood to her feet.

"we are," she said. she stared at her lover, her comrade, her friend, and ignored the world around them that they had slowly deteriorated for centuries. in the time it takes for a spider to blink—

—they clashed—

—and the world shuddered around them.

night fell and rose, fell again, slammed into them like waves on sand in a winter storm. worlds ended and began and the worst battle War had ever started began and ended with Death, with Alina.

she tore her scythe into the world and destroyed his ambition; he slammed his battleax into the sky and conquered her power.

and between them both, the battle never ended. it came and went with the seasons, and famine and pestilence scuttled beneath them, far below the two who controlled the universe and who came before and after each other.

War sunk his teeth into her neck; Death pierced his heart with her hand.

and still there they remain, locked in a horrifying embrace,
until one,
or the other,
lets go.

...and may they never let go.

End Notes

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